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ABSTRACT

These proceedings, from a Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD) Invited Symposium for Lightspan Reform Model users highlight group participants' experiences in implementing a comprehensive school reform process using the Lightspan "Achieve Now" education program. They shared in various ways how this skill-and-content model engages an entire school community in reflection, renewal, and reform. Schools from five states were represented: Georgia, Kansas, Mississippi, Wisconsin, and Virginia. This article includes highlights from the invited symposium, and illustrates how some schools are meeting the challenge of comprehensive school reform. The article discusses nine components required by the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program: (1) innovative, replicable, research-based strategies; (2) comprehensive design with aligned components; (3) professional development; (4) measurable goals and benchmarks; (5) support within the school; (6) parental and community involvement; (7) external technical support and assistance; (8) evaluation strategies; and (9) coordination of resources. An appendix names symposium participants. (DFR)

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Lightspan in Action: A Skill-and-Content Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program Model

Proceedings from a CSRD Invited Symposium for Lightspan Reform Model Users

San Diego, California
October 21, 1999

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Edited by Anuradha Kohls, Ethel Porter, Ph.D., and Bernice Stafford

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LIGHTSPAN™

Lightspan in Action: A Skill-and-Content Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program Model

On October 21, 1999, Lightspan, Inc. convened school educators from across the country for a structured small group discussion in San Diego. The discussion was regarding their experiences in implementing a comprehensive school reform process using the Lightspan Achieve Now™ educational program. They shared in various ways how this skill-and-content model engages an entire school community in reflection, renewal, and reform.

School Improvement: We're Not There Yet

Since the mid-1980's, standards-based reform has dominated the education policy scene. Frustrated by unfavorable comparisons to other industrialized countries, parents and policymakers alike began to support reforms that put student achievement at the top of the priority list. The standards movement, intended to provide a blueprint for what students should "know and be able to do," has helped schools to focus their efforts on a process of continuous academic improvement for all students. New assessments were needed to gauge progress on achievement of the new standards, and new accountability systems were needed to ensure that schools were succeeding at their redefined task.

The movement, led by states, the federal government and national organizations, has now become a reality for schools across the country. The federal Goals 2000 program and the 1996 Governors' Summit inspired some debate about the specifics of implementation and governance, but nevertheless solidified commitment among policymakers to the need for higher standards.

By now, nearly every state has developed standards and is working to align assessment and accountability systems. These reforms have generally been characterized by several common features: challenging academic standards set by the state that would specify what all students should know and be able to do; aligned policies for testing, accountability, teacher certification and professional development to the new standards; and restructured educational governance to give teachers and schools more autonomy in deciding how to best teach students to achieve the standards (Massell, Kirst, & Hope, 1997). Standards-based reform means not only that what students learn is changing, but that the way they learn is changing as well. Implementing standards has introduced a new paradigm for the way schools operate, from what goes on in the classroom to how a school's budget is developed and professional development funds are allocated. Educators have realized that much work needs still to be done to align curricula with the new standards, train teachers how to teach new content in new ways, and to ensure that assessments are useful towards students' academic progress.

At the same time, technology has become an increasingly powerful force in education. Federal programs like the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund are providing much-needed dollars and, more importantly, encouraging schools to think about the best ways to use technology to meet their goals. The E-Rate provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 provide for significant discounts on telecommunications serv-

ices for schools serving low-income students. The potential is clearly enormous, but figuring out how to use technology effectively in the context of standards-based reform is a quandary that continues to challenge most schools. Policymakers and educators struggle to make these seemingly disparate initiatives come together toward a common goal.

Schools, especially those serving low-income students, have little capacity to do all of this on their own, particularly in terms of the professional development opportunities needed for the new skills and knowledge required from teachers and administrators (Massell, Kirst & Hope, 1997). Consequently, schools are increasingly turning to outside providers of technical assistance for instruction, professional development, school management and nearly every other aspect of school operations.

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program: An Opportunity for Lasting Change

Recognizing both this lack of capacity and the fact that lasting reforms cannot take place unless they cohesively address every aspect of teaching and learning, Congress allocated $150 million in the fall of 1997 to support the implementation of "whole-school" reforms. Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD) funds, most of which are earmarked for Title I schools, are distributed by states through a competitive grant process and provide a minimum of $50,000 per school per year for three years.

Guidance governing this program issued by the U.S. Department of Education permits schools to design their own research-based reform. However, most states encourage schools to use CSRD grants to implement proven reform models with technical assistance from an external provider. Schools must develop implementation strategies that take into account each of the nine required program components, since no single service provider can address all of them externally. Federal funds first became available in July 1998. To date, more than 1,800 schools, using more than 280 different reform models, have been awarded CSRD grants. With the fiscal year 2000 appropriation increasing to $220 million, an additional 1,000 schools may receive grants.

In the Catalog of School Reform Models, developed under contract to the U.S. Department of Education, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) has assigned school reform models to two categories: Entire-School and Skill-and-Content. One of the most popular reform models chosen by CSRD schools is Lightspan, a standards-based instructional program in reading, language arts and mathematics that focuses on increased time-on-task, significant family involvement in schoolwork, professional development for teachers, and the use of interactive technologies. Lightspan is being used in 120 CSRD-funded schools, making it the third most implemented model in the program to date (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2000). Materials include hundreds of CD-ROM-based learning activities, as well as Internet connectivity through Lightspan.com and The Lightspan Network®. Schools can use these resources to support curricula in any combination of ways that best suits their needs, including classroom instruction, homework, after-school programs, or summer school. The software can be delivered on a PlayStation® game console connected to a television set or on a computer, making important equity issues much more manageable without sacrificing the power of interactivity.

In its role as an external technical assistance provider, in October 1999 Lightspan, Inc. invited a representative group of educators from schools using Lightspan to a Symposium to share information and ideas about how to deepen the "whole-school" reform in which they were engaged. Schools from six states were represented, including: Paulding County and Walker County School Districts in Georgia; Wichita, Kansas Public Schools; Leflore County School District in Mississippi; Beloit, Wisconsin Public Schools; and North Hampton and Caroline Counties in Virginia. Although it was very early in the school's implementation process,

the Symposium brought to light the full spectrum of issues these schools are dealing with as they address the components of the CSRD Program. This article includes highlights from the invited Symposium, illustrating how some schools are meeting the challenge of comprehensive school reform. For clarity, it is important to emphasize that each of these schools views Lightspan as an indispensable component of its own locally-developed reform effort, which is the proper role of a Skill-and-Content CSRD reform model.

Nine components are required by the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program:

1) **innovative, replicable, research-based strategies**
2) **comprehensive design with aligned components**
3) **professional development**
4) **measurable goals and benchmarks**
5) **support within the school**
6) **parental and community involvement**
7) **external technical support and assistance**
8) **evaluation strategies**
9) **coordination of resources**

CSRD in Action: Meeting the Challenge—Addressing the Nine Components

Component 1: Innovative, replicable, research-based strategies

While education research may be lacking in many areas, on a few subjects the facts are clear: increasing time for learning and promoting family involvement are two of the most important factors in academic achievement (National Commission on Time and Learning, 1994).

Schools are addressing the need for more time in different ways; there is no one answer. At Cherokee Ridge Elementary School in Walker County, Georgia, Lightspan is being used both at home and in the school, where each teacher has software and a Sony PlayStation. According to Nancy Lance, curriculum specialist at Cherokee Ridge Elementary School in Walker County, Georgia, this implementation design complements the school's block scheduling and class-size reduction efforts.

The facts about family involvement are perhaps most compelling. The U.S. Department of Education reported in 1994 that children whose families are involved in their schooling achieve higher test scores, earn better grades, graduate at higher rates, and are more likely to enroll in higher education. In fact, active family participation in student learning is more important than financial status to academic achievement. Participants at the October 1999 Symposium agreed that these principles are at the heart of their reform efforts. They also agreed that Lightspan, which is grounded in sociology research as well as education and cognition, best serves this core mission.

Component 2: A comprehensive design

The CSRD program component requiring a comprehensive reform design encapsulates the full spectrum of implementation challenges for standards-based reform. The legislation requires CSRD sites to "have a comprehensive design for effective school functioning, including instruction, assessment, classroom management, professional development, parental involvement, and school management that aligns the school's curriculum, technology, and professional development into a school-wide reform plan designed to enable all students to meet challenging state content and performance standards and addresses needs identified through a school needs assessment."

The needs assessment is the first step to identifying the right reform design, a process many Symposium participants found as rewarding as it was difficult. During the discussion, participants emphasized how

the needs assessment process helped them to clearly identify and articulate the focus of their reform effort. For Anderson Elementary School in Wichita, Kansas, this process clearly identified the need to improve math and reading scores, provide greater access to technologies, and to improve parent involvement in students' academic programs. After investigating several reform models including many widely used "whole-school" reforms (and not wanting to uproot successful practices already making a difference for students), school staff selected Lightspan to help them address the identified needs. Staff in Paulding County, Georgia, also conducted an extensive needs assessment for their CSRD application, including student, parent and staff surveys, as well as focus groups. Groups of teachers sat down together to review the results and found that the two areas in which help was most needed were strategies for working with diverse learners and a relationship between home and school that supported student learning. As in Wichita, staff in Paulding County determined from their needs assessment that areas requiring the most attention could be addressed by incorporating Lightspan into successful practices already in place. They reasoned that this step alone would advance their reform efforts because it would obviate the need to initiate reform from square one. In Caroline County, Georgia, needs assessments showed that raising reading scores had to be the main objective. Lightspan was chosen because the three areas of work determined most critical to achieving that objective were: parental involvement, the need to unify teachers toward a common direction, and better staff development.

"Teachers were so ready for the tools to make the standards come alive."

Research suggests that one reason for the lack of widespread success of previous reforms is the tendency to impose entirely new materials onto an existing system or to eliminate proven successful practices at a particular school with their population. "Despite the fact that this strategy has rarely worked, adopting new curriculum materials, for example, is one of the most widely used interventions" (Cohen & Ball 1999). For schools in the process of undertaking the difficult work of standards-based reform, this temptation can make or break a reform initiative. Ortygia Carnette, supervisor of federal programs in Caroline County, Virginia, noted that, "One of the reasons Lightspan fit our needs so well is that it did not replace the curriculum, which we'd worked very hard to map and align with the Virginia Standards of Learning. It enhanced, rather than replaced, the curriculum." Mary Stuedemann, reading specialist from Burdge Elementary School in Beloit, Wisconsin, described the countless hours that the school staff has spent with the standards, from assisting in developing the state standards to writing district standards. "Teachers were so ready for the tools to make the standards come alive."

Aligning curriculum and assessment to standards is a difficult task for most schools, and Symposium participants were no exception. Teachers at Burdge undertook the task of going through assessments item by item. They soon realized that, although material was being covered, it was not being covered at an acceptable level. "More often than we would have liked," said Stuedemann, "we were presenting material at the knowledge and comprehension stage, and they [students] were being assessed at the application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation stages. We had to face our own data and decide what to do about it. With CSRD we began to realize that Lightspan matched the levels of expectation that we were after." Once teachers realize the gaps in their instruction, they need to find resources to fill them, and have little patience for materials that take them off track.

"We had to face our own data and decide what to do about it. With CSRD we began to realize that Lightspan matched the levels of expectation we were after."

Prairie Hills, Illinois, assistant superintendent Steve Kozlowski has worked to help people in his district realize what standards-based assessment means for

curriculum. "The fact is that the textbook being used only aligned 20 percent with the standards, a message that got very quickly to the teachers." According to Carnette, "In Virginia, we have found that Lightspan materials are 90 percent aligned with standards, higher than any of the other reforms that we could see." Nancy Lance agreed. "For Georgia, there was a 100 percent alignment in math to the state assessment, and 95.6 percent in reading. That was a big sale to the teachers."

Aligning technology with school improvement can add another layer of complexity to the already difficult task of aligning standards, curriculum, instruction and professional development. In Leflore County, Mississippi, E-Rate funds were used last year to wire schools for the first time, an opportunity that has teachers very excited about the Internet and the potential of technology. According to Ann Adams, assistant superintendent at Leflore County Elementary School, implementing Lightspan is helping to channel the excitement of the Internet into something focused on instruction and student learning. For other Symposium participants, too, the possibilities had been daunting. In at least one school in the Illinois Prairie Hills School District, teachers had very little direct contact with technology, all of which was located in computer labs. "As a result of the staff development that was provided through the Lightspan program and having the technology in the classrooms," said Becky Adams, principal of the Primary Academic Center, "the teachers have lost their fear of it and that's going to carry over to other aspects of the curriculum in other programs as well."

Sometimes just managing the mountain of material is an obstacle to effective alignment. Georgia's lottery program provides a considerable amount of technology, but according to Walker County's Nancy Lance, it just wasn't reaching the kids. "When you look at the number of pieces of software there are and the time that it would take to select it and get to know how to use it in the classroom, there's no way teachers have time. Our teachers can now go to the Lightspan Index and within a moment or two pull out the CDs they want. They still have to play the game to determine whether or not it is what they want, but no other [system] allows them to easily pick up CD-ROMs on 90-100 percent of the objectives that they have to teach."

Beyond alignment, one of the biggest barriers to effective instructional reform is the fact that, for many educators, there just don't seem to be enough hours in the day to accomplish what needs to take place if students are to achieve higher standards. In Walker County, the district and state requirements for meeting goals and benchmarks toward student achievement on standards-based curriculum have been a real challenge. "Teachers do not have enough time to teach a standards-based curriculum between 8:00 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. every day. We had to find a model that would help extend the learning day," said Lance. "The Lightspan model so closely tied with the state and local curriculum that we knew it was a way to improve what we were already doing. Lightspan also helped us do several other things we wanted—motivate students to be engaged, self-directed learners, and show parents how they could help their children at home."

"The fact is that the textbook being used only aligned 20 percent with the standards, a message that got very quickly to the teachers."

Component 3: Professional development

A great deal of attention has been paid to professional development, but not all of it has been in the service of comprehensive reform. This is changing in Beloit, Wisconsin, where educators decided to approach staff development as a purposeful continuum, allowing time for material to sink in gradually, rather than taking a "checklist" approach to training teachers. Because of time constraints, the professional development takes place at dinner meetings (with the help of a rotating substitute teacher) and during August. Of all the forms of staff development, according to Mary Stuedemann, the most effective is when the "events take place close to the participants' world of work."

According to Steve Kozlowski, teachers in his district know where they have to go with standards-based reform, but don't have the technical expertise for aligning to the standards. Lightspan's guidance in putting together standards, instructional lessons, Internet resources, and curriculum is accelerating the process of moving teachers into that standards-based mode. "And then you couple that with the fact that it's in an easy-to-use, non-intimidating form, and the teachers are very anxious to use it."

"Teachers do not have enough time to teach a standards-based curriculum between 8:00 A.M. and 2:30 P.M. every day. We had to find a model that would help extend the learning day."

Component 4: Goals and benchmarks

Participants reported that a wide variety of assessments are being used to track student progress as part of their CSRD program. In most cases, a combination of assessments is being used. Wichita, Kansas uses both state and district assessments in reading, math, and writing; a standardized test for seventh-grade math; and formative assessments in reading and math. Schools using Lightspan are not just establishing benchmarks for student achievement, but for family involvement and school performance as well. Pre-test results are compared with post-test results for individual student performance data.

"When you look at the number of pieces of software there are and the time that it would take to select it and get to know how to use it in the classroom, there's no way teachers have time."

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of standards-based reform is the extent to which policies focus on "alignment" as a component rather than an ongoing process of improvement. The Lightspan model is based on the principles of continuous improvement. In Beloit, Wisconsin, this means that professional development is focused on training in data-driven decision making. According to Beloit's Mary Stuedemann, it's an important step towards empowering, rather than enabling, the teachers. "Instead of just telling the teachers what tasks to work on, it's important that we help the teachers own their data, figure out themselves what needs to be done, and help each other do the same. Using the Lightspan CD-ROMs to do this is easy. Key to this is keeping track of your own efforts and helping others along as you figure out what works."

Ultimately, students can only improve if they get specific help on their individual learning needs. CD-ROM technology allows students to repeat skill sets and spend more time on certain topics automatically, without, as one participant put it, "having to wait to get an F before trying it again."

Component 5: Support within the school

Motivating teachers, of course, is very important as well. If teachers don't believe in the reform, no amount of superficial agreement required by a model developer will get the job done. Some of the teachers in Caroline County, Virginia, were reluctant to change. According to Ortygia Carnette, "Lightspan has wonderful people who do the staff development, but they were met with some long faces. The teachers just listened patiently. They did take some of the materials home over the summer, however, and we could not believe the enthusiasm when they came back. The teachers were very fired up." Accepting a theory while attending a training session is one thing, but when the material itself inspires teachers, the results are powerful. It can make the difference between a good idea that never gets used and a working tool that truly changes what happens for kids in a classroom.

Walker County, Georgia teachers are finding that more and more people want to come visit their classrooms. "The more teachers have someone coming in and asking them about Lightspan and about comprehensive

school reform," said Nancy Lance, "the better they feel about themselves. And interest is starting to spread."

Component 6: Meaningful parent involvement

Although family involvement and out-of-school experiences have long been acknowledged as critical to student achievement, these issues continue to challenge schools attempting comprehensive reform. An extensive body of research shows that kids do better in school when their parents are involved. For too long, parent involvement has been defined by bake sales and booster clubs, occasional notes home and parent-teacher conferences. Few schools have succeeded in getting parents involved with the actual learning process because few have really known how to even try. For most Symposium participants, this is the most important contribution Lightspan makes to their comprehensive school reform program. "So much of the family involvement that we had in the past was superficial. It was coming to music nights or coming to meet-your-teacher night; it wasn't really being involved with the students at home with their homework," said Chris Reed, a resource teacher at Anderson Elementary School in Wichita, Kansas. "Using Lightspan created a common language with the parents. The teacher didn't have to make an elaborate plan to send home."

"Instead of just telling the teachers what tasks to work on, it's important that we help the teachers own their data, figure out themselves what needs to be done, and help other teachers do the same."

In Paulding County, Georgia, parents responded overwhelmingly to the needs assessment survey, and made it clear that it would be easier for them to help their children if they knew what their children were supposed to be learning, if their children were motivated to learn, and if the school provided them with easy-to-follow instructions for what they could be doing at home. For Bonnie Cochran, an elementary school teacher in Paulding, "Lightspan does a great job of responding to each one of these."

As states fully implement standards-based reform, many are considering high-stakes accountability systems. This puts a new exigency on parent involvement, as Steve Kozlowski reported to be the case in Illinois' Prairie Hill School District. As a result of the new state policy eliminating social promotion, "Almost overnight there's an awareness at the parent level of state standards ... and what's really nice about Lightspan is, with the alignment guides, you can have that discussion right away. You can tell parents, 'Here is something specific you could do at home to actually support your student's ability to be promoted to the next grade level.'" Parents are worried about promotion, and Lightspan makes it easy to describe exactly what tasks a student can do to improve.

Burdge Elementary School in Beloit, Wisconsin, uses a parent compact to make sure everyone knows what's expected of them. It also helps to keep the focus on extending the learning time to "celebrate rather than remediate," said teacher Mary Stuedemann. "An important point for us to realize is that many of our parents have not graduated from high school, and are learning right along with the students. Not all of our parents had a pleasant experience in school. Through Lightspan they can save face."

Burdge staff made another interesting discovery. Principal Barbara Hickman reported, "We found that we saw an increase in involvement from the fathers in the family. For our particular school, that was really significant ... the dads would sit with the children in the evening in order to get through the work. In all of my years of experience, I cannot think of any program that has had that effect." Recent research suggests that involvement by fathers, though most often lacking, is particularly critical to children's success in schools (Nord, 1998).

Component 7: External technical assistance

Symposium participants agreed on the importance of good external technical assistance. Many were working with every available resource possible. North

Hampton County Schools in Virginia, whose reform effort combines four different programs including Lightspan, must contend with a remote geography in addition to the high poverty level of its citizens. Teachers and administrators work closely with their Regional Education Laboratory, the State Department of Education, the local community college and several state universities. They've also found the PTA invaluable to their reform efforts. "The school system, at 400 employees, is the largest employer in the county," said assistant superintendent Nancy Freeze. "In our area, if you can provide food, you can get the parents, so the PTA worked with us to provide dinner for 'deployment night.'" Paulding County, Georgia, too, is tapping a wide variety of support, including district curriculum, evaluation and technology specialists, assistance from the State Department of Education, Regional Educational Service Agencies, and Regional Technology Training Centers.

"So much of the family involvement that we had in the past was superficial. It was coming to music nights or coming to meet-your-teacher night; it wasn't really being involved with the students at home with their homework."

For all participants, assistance from their local Lightspan representatives was invaluable. For Bonnie Cochran, a teacher at Abney Elementary School in Paulding County, this meant getting help at every stage, from writing the CSRD grant proposal to working with teachers and helping with budget and evaluation. "When we started with the CSRD grant application, I had never written a grant before, and Dolly (Lightspan representative) was at my beck and call and helped me work through that process and answer a lot of questions." Principal Becky Adams from Prairie Hills, Illinois, felt the same way: "Among the primary reasons for what we so far perceive is the success of our program is that our sales representative is providing us more service than for any program we've ever had. Any time we need her, we call and she is right there by phone or in person, depending on which we need. And that support from Lightspan has been a significant factor."

Component 8: Evaluation

Continuous improvement principles are key to the Lightspan program, which provides for a systemic understanding of how data is used and guides schools through thorough self-evaluations. Schools using Lightspan are also encouraged to conduct extensive action research projects as part of this self-evaluation. In Walker County, Georgia, a rigorous evaluation effort has been planned, including random classroom visits and interviews with the principal. Appalachian Educational Laboratory has been contracted by the state to put that data into a format the school can use to help improve and to set process benchmarks. Teachers in the county are beginning to understand that they'll be observed and data will be collected to make improvements, not to evaluate teaching performance. According to Nancy Lance, "The evaluations help keep us focused on goals, so that we can pool resources and coordinate personnel around improvement." Larry Gwaltney, an independent evaluator working in Wichita, Kansas, reminded Symposium participants that planning for evaluation when designing implementation makes the process easier and more meaningful.

Component 9: Coordinating resources

Most Symposium participants represented schools with a long history of Title I support and are no strangers to the task of finding multiple resources for meeting their schools' needs. The challenge now is to coordinate funds around a focused set of objectives. Many resources were noted, including Eisenhower funds for staff development, Goals 2000, preschool initiative funds, and district professional development resources, in addition to other state and federal funding programs. Nancy Freeze noted that, like many CSRD schools, North Hampton, Virginia schools are also eligible for an 80% discount on telecommunications services through the E-Rate program, and that coordinating this variety of resources "requires a tremendous amount of com-

munication." The Lightspan staff provides schools with simple, easy-to-use planning tools to help them better focus their fiscal resources.

At Abney Elementary School in Paulding County, Georgia, relationships have also been fostered with local colleges and universities. Serving as a "lab school" has kept staff aware of current trends and education research. The county has a school-based budget system and a school-based model for professional development, so instructional funds are directed specifically to meet school improvement efforts. The state's "Pay for Performance School Improvement Program," which offers group merit pay, has also been a helpful incentive.

The Road to Results: Student Achievement is the Ultimate Goal

The CSRD legislation calls for innovative strategies for student learning. As policymakers continue to put forth ambitious initiatives and educators work to improve their professional practice, perhaps the most innovative strategy of all is one that actually motivates students to do the work necessary to learn. The Lightspan program is fully centered on making learning fun, emotionally safe, and rewarding, and is based on the idea that serious play leads to serious learning.

This has been an important lesson for Cherokee Ridge, where, according to Nancy Lance, eight Playstations have been set up for before- and after-school use. "We have a lot of children who would come to school at 5 o'clock A.M. if we would open the doors." As a result, teachers at Cherokee Ridge are getting more involved with research and learning. Symposium participants were quick to acknowledge that educators do not always practice what they know. Yet, according to Nancy Lance, "We learned that our students needed to be engaged to learn and that it needs to be a risk-free environment, one in which they're not afraid of making a mistake. With the Lightspan tasks, students are rewarded for success with the higher level. At home they can continue to challenge themselves in an environment where they don't have to risk failing." Assistant superintendent Nancy Freeze reported that, in North Hampton County, Virginia, "Students are calling each other at night to see who has how many points and to ask each other questions. Homework, not only with Lightspan but in other subject areas, is getting done that was not getting done in the past."

"Serious play," a term coined by Professor Dale Mann of Teachers College at Columbia University (1996), can be one of the educator's most beneficial strategies. It promotes memory in children and provides a foundation for the development of more sophisticated memory strategies; it helps children develop, enrich, and reinforce language and literacy skills; and it fosters development of cognitive skills in reading and math problem-solving. Researchers observing children at play have noticed a tendency for their personas to change; a tendency for them to appear more mature and deliberate; and to perform feats that, if the children were not playing, most adults would label as too difficult for children of that age to master.

"Students are calling each other at night to see who has how many points and to ask each other questions. Homework, not only with Lightspan but in other subject areas, is getting done that was not getting done in the past."

The Lightspan program design is grounded in data from several areas of academic research, including family involvement, time, learning theory, motivation, and reading and mathematics instruction. This program design is creating an environment at the schools represented in the Symposium that makes school attendance relevant. The design is changing the way in which instructional programs are conceptualized and organized. If school reform is about rethinking familiar paradigms, Lightspan is helping to provide a vision for comprehensive school change.

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Appendix

Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD)
Invited Symposium for Lightspan Reform Model Users

Thursday, October 21, 1999

Beloit County School District, Wisconsin

Barbara Hickman, Principal,
Burdge Elementary School

Mary Stuedemann, Reading Specialist,
Burdge Elementary School

Caroline County School District, Virginia

Ortygia Carnette, Title I Director,
Caroline Middle School

Rebecca Beale, Assistant Principal,
Caroline Middle School

Leflore County School District, Mississippi

Ann Adams, Assistant Superintendent,
Leflore County Elementary School

Samuel Johnson, Principal,
Leflore County Elementary School

Janice Barnes, Site Coordinator,
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W. C. Abney School

Harriet Ruff, Director, Pupil Services,
W. C. Abney School

Cathy Magouyrk, Principal,
P. B. Ritch Elementary School

Karla Payne, Teacher,
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